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Elite Recruitment and National Socialism: The SS-Führerkorps, 1925 - 1939

Herbert F. Ziegler

Adolf Hitler, along with most of his disciples and supporters, professed and indeed believed that National Socialism was a revolutionary movement and, regardless of the interpretation of Nazism that is espoused, "the authenticity of the revolutionary impulse is undeniable 1)." Ostensibly the Third Reich would usher in "a new social order in which class conflict and ideological cleavages would disappear and be replaced by a sense of national solidarity and by a commitment on the part of every individual to put the interests of the nation before self (Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz) 2)."

The abstraction employed by National Socialism to portray their social model was the backward ideal of a racial community, or *Volksgemeinschaft*, a countermodel, as it were, to the 'class-society' diagnosed by its political opponents of the Left. Part and parcel of the Nazi concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was a disdain for and aversion to the rigid immobility of traditional social hierarchies, coupled with the resolve to conquer the antiquated and restrictive elite criteria of inherited birthright and social rank 3).

Notwithstanding the obvious and often noted "archaic and atavistic 4)" ingredients of Nazi ideology and the alleged backward-looking, reactionary character of Nazism's mass support, there can be detected in Hitler's movement an undeniably modern appeal proffering social mobility 5).

If the concept of the people's community with its emphasis on social mobi-

1) Leonard Krieger, "Nazism: Highway or Byway?" in: *Central European History* 11 (March 1978): pp. 3 - 22, here 14.

2) Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism 1919 - 1945*. 2 vols. (Exeter, 1984), p. 376.

3) John Hiden and John Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany. Historians and the Third Reich* (London, 1983), p. 86 suggest that the concept of the people's community must be taken more seriously than it sometimes has been.

4) Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship, Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, 1985), p. 147.

5) Kershaw, *Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 134, 147. Jeremy Noakes, "Nazism and Revolution," in: Noel O'Sullivan, ed., *Revolutionary Theory and Political reality* (London, 1983), p. 85 states that the concept of careers open to talent had been an article of faith since the very earliest days, reflecting a resentment at the traditional barriers of upward mobility posed by birth, property, and education. For modern aspects of Nazism see also Martin Broszat, "Zur Struktur der NS-Massenbewegung," in: *Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (1983) pp. 52 - 76 and Timothy W. Mason, "Zur Entstehung des Gesetzes zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit, vom 20. Januar 1934: Ein Versuch über das Verhältnis 'archaischer' und 'moderner' Momente in der neuesten deutschen Geschichte," in: Hans Mommsen et al., eds., *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1974) pp. 322 - 51.

lity was more than simple election rhetoric or cosmetic veneer of NS ideology, the social or substantive content of the Nazi revolution should be readily discernible in the recruitment practices of German elites. In the event that the Nazis were truly committed to the idea of an open elite they, in the aftermath of the seizure of power, should have begun to practice something akin to a democracy in personnel selection.

In an effort to test empirically the notion of "openness" of National Socialist elites 6), and the closely related subject of fostering social mobility, we have analyzed three variables which serve as proxy indicators of class standings of the pre-war SS - F ü h r e r k o r p s. These highly interrelated variables are "father's occupation", the "F ü h r e r's occupation learned", and the "F ü h r e r's educational attainment." By establishing with as much precision as possible the social base of the pre-war SS leadership, we hope to answer one principal question: what proportion of SS leaders came from any given segment of society? 7) Put differently, do the social origins of Himmler's recruits justify the characterization of SS policies as emphasizing the selection of the able for high posts, regardless of social position? were they policies which opened up new possibilities for the lower classes while eschewing the privileges of the upper classes? Indeed, was SS - O b e r g r u p p e n f ü h r e r Mathias Kleinheisterkamp correct when he remarked, "this is how it is in the SS, a coachman is U n t e r s t u r m f ü h r e r (2nd Lieutenant) while an educated person is S c h a r f ü h r e r (Sergeant)" 8).

The Data: Sources, Selection, and Sampling

This work is based on data relating to the lives of 1,947 SS - F ü h r e r who

6) The question concerning the social recruitment of the NS movement is as old as the NS success. A comprehensive account of published sources concerning NSDAP members, leaders and voters is provided by Eike H e n n i g, *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft und Faschismus in Deutschland. Ein Forschungsbericht* (Frankfurt/M. 1977), pp. 157 - 233. See also Peter D. S t a c h u r a, "Who were the Nazis? A Socio-Political Analysis of the National Socialist Machtübernahme," *European Studies Review* II (1981), 293 - 324.

7) The scope of our analysis is limited, therefore, to the attributes, circumstances, and motives of the individuals from each social class who decided to join the SS. Though frequently overlooked, the reason for this limitation is obvious. There is the temptation to make generalizations about an entire class based on the findings on the social make-up of a particular organization when in fact only a proportion of a given class belonged to the organization in question. Put simply, because a particular fraction of the SS membership was recruited from a certain section of society does not mean that the entire class responded en bloc. Should we find, for instance, that some thirty percent of the SS leadership was recruited from the upper stratum of German bourgeois society this does not imply that thirty percent of the entire upper class joined the SS, but only a minute minority. This point has been made by Richard F. H a m i l t o n, "Reply to Commentators," *Central European History* 27 (1984) p. 73.

8) Berlin Document Center, Personnel File of Mathias Kleinheisterkamp.

held the rank of *SS - Untersturmführer* or higher before 1939. Individual *SS - Führer* were identified by way of the *Dienstaltersliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP*, Stand 31.12.1938, Bearbeitet von der Personalkanzlei (Berlin, 1938), which furnished the names and other identifying information of all *SS - Führer* according to rank. This rankstratified list was subdivided into three strata consisting of the *SS - Totenkopfverbände* (*SS - TV*), the *SS - Verfügungstruppe* (*SS - VT*), and the *Allgemeine SS* (*Allg. SS*). Once the *Führer* were identified, biographical information on them was collected from the *SS* personnel records of the Berlin Document Center⁹). These records are divided into two collections: (1) the *SS Officer Files* (*SSO*) containing folders of varying completeness for 61,465 *SS - Führer* and (2) and files of the Race and Settlement Main Office (*RuSHA*), comprising some 238,00 folders pertaining to *Führer*, *Unterführer*, and enlisted personnel of the *SS*. Both collections were used extensively in order to collect biographical information on all members of the *SS - Totenkopfverbände*, the *SS - Verfügungstruppe*, and a randomly selected sample of *Allgemeine - SS* members. In the event that certain items could not be located among these records, because some entries were illegible or simply missing, an attempt was made to locate the desired information from the *SA* and *NSDAP* Masterfiles of the Berlin Document Center. Because the *TV* and *VT* strata had relatively few cases ($N = 437$ and $N = 766$ respectively), data were collected on all those individuals who belonged to either of these groups. As to the *Allg. SS*, which was so large (total population $N = 12,669$) as to render collection of data on all individuals redundant, a systematic random sample of 900 men was chosen to represent this branch of the *SS*¹⁰). Because records for a very small number of individuals could not be located, and some information was not identifiable where documents had been damaged, the final samples consist of 400 *SS - TV*, 692 *SS - VT* and 851 *Allg. SS* members (total $N = 1943$)¹¹). Members of the *SS - Sicherheits-*

9) The holdings of the BDC are described in George C. Browder, "Problems and Potentials of the Berlin Document Center," *Central European History* 4 (1972), pp. 362 - 380.

10) Standard works on sampling include W. G. Cochran, *Sampling Techniques* (New York, 1953) and Taro Yamane, *Elementary Sampling Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967). Also helpful are L. Kish, "Selection of a Sample," in: L. Festinger and D. Katz, eds. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (New York, 1953) and Bernard Lazewitz, "Sampling Theory and Procedures," in: Hubert M. Blalock and Ann B. Blalock, eds., *Methodology in Social Research* (New York, 1968).

11) Samples are collected as a matter of convenience, and the usual goal of statistical analysis is to make inferences about population parameters on the basis of known but intrinsically unimportant sample statistics. Thus, it is not enough to merely establish possible relationships or differences between variables, or delineate the strength or direction of relationships, but one must also determine whether or not the results found in the sample

dienst and so-called SS-Ehrenführer (honorary commanders) are purposely not included in the sample 12). The former represented a separate organization 13) that was distinct in functional terms, and the latter, were not actually part of the SS organization. SS-Ehrenführer was a title granted to persons of influence and power in the Third Reich who were permitted to wear SS uniforms, usually carried high ranks, but had no direct command authority 14).

Two guiding principles for coding data were used. First, whenever possible, the information on SS members was coded and categorized in a manner that conforms to the criteria used by the German Statistical Office and, in many instances, to those employed by other scholars. Such a coding scheme has an important advantage. It affords a direct comparison between the distributional characteristics of the SS-Führerkorps and the German population on the one hand, and between the SS-Führerkorps, the leadership of the SA and the general membership of the NSDAP on the other — comparisons without which the presentation of any results on the SS itself become relatively

actually existed in the population represented by the sample or samples. The accepted procedure toward this end is to perform tests of statistical significance, and we have calculated the appropriate measures for all numerical relationships discussed and presented in this work. Whenever use was made of contingency table analysis in order to establish bivariate relationships, a chi-square test was computed; when comparisons of sample means were made to test mean differences, a student's t statistic was computed. Unless otherwise indicated, the level of significance adopted was 05. As to statistical significance, the latter should not be confused with practical or substantive significance. For a discussion of this subject see Sanford Labovitz, "Criteria for Selecting a Significance Level: A Note on the Sacredness of .05" in: *American Sociologist* 3 (1968), pp. 220 - 222; James K. Skipper, Anthony L. Guenther, and Gilbert Mass, "The Sacredness of .05: A Note Concerning the Use of Statistical Levels of Significance," in: *The American Sociologist* 1 (1967), pp. 16 - 16; Thomas J. Duggan and Charles W. Dean, "Common Misinterpretations of Significance Levels in Sociological Journals," in: *The American Sociologist* 3 (1968) pp. 45 - 46; David Gould, "Statistical Tests and Substantive Significance," in: *The American Sociologist* 4 (1969), pp. 42 - 46; R. F. Finch and D. T. Campbell, "Proof? No. Evidence? Yes. The Significance of Significance Tests," in: *The American Sociologist* 4 (1969), pp. 140 - 143; D. Morrison and R. Henkel, eds., *The Significance Test Controversy* (Chicago, 1970); K. W. Taylor and James Frides, "Issues versus Controversies: Substantive and Statistical Significance," in: *American Sociological Review* 37 (1972), pp. 464 - 472.

12) In order to identify Ehrenführer we relied on the judgment of Egon Burchartz, Chief of the Evaluation Section, BDC, who is intimately familiar with the personnel of the SS. He was asked to identify from the Dienstalersliste of 31.12.1938 any Führer who to his knowledge was an Ehrenführer.

13) Robert L. Koehl, *The Black Corps. The Structure and Struggles of the Nazi SS* (Madison, 1983), p. 107.

14) Ermenhild Neuss-Hunkel, *Die SS. (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für wissenschaftliche Politik in Marburg/Lahn, No. 2)* (Hannover, 1956), pp.15,21; *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP* (1943), 435.

meaningless. Relating the social profile of S S - F ü h r e r to that of Nazi party members or S S - F ü h r e r permits us to place findings on the SS within the context of National Socialist organizations, and hence in a more balanced perspective. For example, did the social origins of average SS leaders, most of whom who were also Party members, differ from that of typical NSDAP members and SA leaders and, if so, how did they differ? Likewise, comparing the SS leadership with the German population helps identify those social attributes which might have given individuals advantages or disadvantages in the quest for SS elite status. Because the incidence of characteristics in the populace can be interpreted as the distribution that would be randomly expected among S S - F ü h r e r, this method furnishes a means for assessing the degree — as well as direction — of social biases in the recruitment process. Specifically, the social profile of the SS elite is compared to the literate adult male population — or its nearest approximation 15). This population is much more appropriate for this sort of comparison than the total population at large, because illiterates were obviously marginal to the political system, children had no direct access to it, and women by and large played no role in it. Therefore, unless otherwise indicated, the population is defined as the male population aged 18 - 60, as defined by the German census.

The second principle which directed the coding of information is that any variable should capture as closely as possible the social and economic realities of the time period. In most instances this was not a problem, and coding of information was relatively straightforward, as in the case of data on education, for example. Problems did arise, however, in connection with the critical issue of what part of the SS support came from a given social layer (S c h i c h t) 16) or class. The identification of such groups or classes, both within the population and the SS, was a major task requiring considerable methodological reflection. Unfortunately the latter cannot be taken up here in detail. Suffice it to state that our coding and classification schemes lean heavily on those employed by Michael Kater in his recent study on the NSDAP 17).

Discussion of Findings

The first notable feature of our data on both paternal occupation and the occupation cited by each F ü h r e r is the relatively high proportion of indi-

15) Mandatory education through age 14 and regularity of attendance based on powerful sanctions resulted in extremely low illiteracy rates for German males. See Peter S a n d i f o r d, ed., *Comparative Education: Studies of the Educational System of Six Modern Nations* (London, 1918).

16) The more common term "class" will be employed throughout this book.

17) Michael M. K a t e r, *The Nazi Party, A Social Profile of Members and Leaders. 1919 - 1945* (Cambridge, MA., 1983).

viduals that can be classified as manual workers 18). To be more precise, if we designate the sum of the first three categories in Table 1 as the lower class or working class, we find that roughly one quarter of the SS elite was recruited from this segment of society. Admittedly, men of working class background were underrepresented vis a vis the general population 19), but there is no escaping the conclusion that the SS and its leadership corps were extraordinarily successful in attracting support from workers. No traditional German elite could boast such representation from a class whose occupational and social status was equally low in both Imperial and Weimar Germany. It remains a remarkable accomplishment to have recruited a significant number of workers into the leadership of the most notorious and anti-socialist elite formation of the Third Reich.

Our own data on the *SS-Führerkorps* also indicate that in terms of absolute numbers at least, the largest segment of the pre-war SS leadership was recruited from the lower-middle class 20). To put this finding into the proper perspective, note should be made of the fact that the case for the preponderance of lower-middle class origins is compelling only with respect to data on the occupations of fathers. As far as the occupational structure of SS recruits is concerned, this social stratum was neither underrepresented nor overrepresented in the leadership of the SS. The proportion of SS members with a lower-middle class background matched almost precisely the proportion this class constituted in German society in general.

18) This contrasts greatly with the findings of Bernd Wegner, *Hitler's Politische Soldaten: Die Waffen-SS 1933 - 1945* (Paderborn, 1982), 225 Table 17, which found a 9.8% combination of Arbeiter und Angestellte among the SS leadership. To put these findings into perspective, Wegner collected data only on the upper ranks of the SS-Führerkorps. Thus, he collected data on all Führer from the rank of Standartenführer and upward, and sampled approximately one forth of the Sturmabannführer and Obersturmbannführer who belonged to the field units of the Waffen-SS (see p. 208). An even lower estimate of working class origins for SS leaders is cited by Gunnar C. Boehnert, *A Sociography of the SS Officer Corps, 1925 - 1939* (London, 1978 Ph. D. Dissertation). Although tables 6.1 and 6.3 show 6.3% under the rubric "skilled workers", Boehnert (p. 165) concludes that only 1.1% of the sampled officers belonged to the Arbeiterschicht.

19) Depending on the definition, the proportion of workers hovered around 46 to 50 percent of the total population in the 1920s and 1930s. See for example Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich (Berlin, 1935), 17 where the proportion of workers in the population (excluding military) is cited as 46 and 46.3 percent in 1925 and 1933 respectively. Gerd Hardach, "Klassen und Schichten in Deutschland 1848 - 1970. Probleme einer historischen Strukturanalyse," in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 3 (1977), p. 518 cites the proportion of workers as 55, 49, and 49 percent in 1907, 1925, and 1939 respectively.

20) Boehnert, *SS Officer Corps*. 163 - 164, 206 and Tables 6.1 and 6.3 respectively calculated that some 59% of SS leaders came from the lower middle class.

Another important missive provided by the same data is that the majority of SS recruits coming from a lower-middle class milieu held white collar jobs before joining Heinrich Himmler's organization 21). Among the *Führer's* occupations, roughly thirty percent were classified as salaried employees. The number of civil servants, on the other hand, was quite small 22). In comparison to the population, where approximately five percent were classified as lower or intermediate civil servants, the same occupations were underrepresented in the SS leadership. As to the fathers' occupations, a total of about forty percent fell into the categories of white collar employees and civil servants, with each category making up about twenty percent respectively. The strong presence within the NSDAP and its electorate of salaried employees who faced much economic uncertainty, and lower civil servants who were likely to be disgruntled by salary reductions and disenchanted by a parliamentary democracy which seemingly became increasingly Marxist-oriented, has been noted 23).

Because of the high proportion of salaried employees among the recruits (and civil servants among the fathers), occupations of the old lower-middle class were correspondingly scarce. Among *SS-Führer* the independent craftsmen

21) On the economic situation of the white collar workers in general see, *Winkler*, *Extremismus*, 185; *Hans Speier*, *Die Angestellten vor dem Nationalsozialismus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der deutschen Sozialstruktur 1918 - 1933* (Göttingen, 1977), p. 93; *Jürgen Kocka*, "Zur Problematik der deutschen Angestellten 1914 - 1933," in: *Hans Mommsen*, ed., *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1974), pp. 792 - 811, and by the same author, *Die Angestellten in der deutschen Geschichte 1850 - 1980. Vom Privatbeamten zum angestellten Arbeitnehmer* (Göttingen, 1977), pp. 142- 176.

22) From the mid-twenties to Hitler's assumption of power lower civil servants were overrepresented in the NSDAP. *Kater*, *Nazi Party*, 41 - 42. For the position of civil servants before Hitler's assumption of power see *Hans Mommsen*, "Die Stellung der Beamtenschaft in Reich, Länder und Gemeinden in der Ära Brüning," in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 21 (1973), pp. 151 - 165 and *Wolfgang Ruge*, *Politik und Beamtentum im Parteistaat. Die Demokratisierung der politischen Beamten in Preussen zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Stuttgart, 1965). The ambivalence of the NSDAP towards Germany's civil service has been noted by *Jane Caplan*, "Speaking the Right Language: The Nazi Party and the Civil Service Vote in the Weimar Republic," pp. 182 - 201, in: *Thomas Childers*, ed., *The Formation of the Nazi Constituency 1919 - 1933* (London, 1986). For the Hitler era see *Hans Mommsen*, *Beamtentum im Dritten Reich: Mit ausgewählten Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Beamtenpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1966) and *Jane Caplan*, "The Politics of Administration: The Reich Interior Ministry and the German Civil Service," *Historical Journal* 20 (1977), pp. 707 - 736.

23) *Kater*, *Nazi Party*, pp. 41 - 43; *Geoffrey Pridham*, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria 1923 - 1933* (London, 1973), p. 193; *Thomas Childers*, "The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote," in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (1976), p. 23, *Noakes and Pridham*, *Documentary Reader*, p. 90; *Hans Mommsen*, "Die Stellung der Beamtenschaft in Reich, Ländern und Gemeinden in der Ära Brüning," in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 21 (1973), pp. 154 - 155; *Mommsen*, "Beamtentum," pp. 197 - 99.

and the owners of small shops could hardly be found, and even farmers were notably underrepresented 24). The sum of all occupations that embraced the *Alte Mittelstand* amounted to five to eight percent of all occupations cited by SS members. By comparison, the same categories of independent craftsmen, small businessmen, and farmers constituted about twenty four percent of all occupations in the German population. The same pattern holds for the occupational structure of fathers. Although the proportion of the old middle class-type occupations tended to be higher than they were among their sons, they were either less than or equal to the proportion of occupations that would be expected from the distribution in the population. Thus, although it may well be true that shopkeepers and craftsmen were harmed by the growth of factories and department stores, and suffered from a feeling of neglect and sociopolitical isolation 25) and despite the fact that farmers faced economic plight on form of declining income and foreclosures 26), the old lower middle class did not serve as an important recruiting reservoir for the *SS - Führerkorps*.

The upper ranks of the *Mittelstand* as represented by the occupational categories of "managers", "high level civil servants", "military officers", and "professionals" (and students in the case of *Führer*) were all heavily over-

24) These figures must have been disappointing to Himmler who was so fond of dreaming of a Greater Germanic Empire in which German peasant settlers would play an important role. For Himmler's interest in the plight of the German farmer and his personal role in the propaganda efforts of the NSDAP see Johnpeter Horst Grill, "The Nazi Party's Rural Propaganda Before 1928," in: *Central European History* (15 June, 1982), pp. 149 - 185, here pp. 171 - 173.

25) Kater, *Nazi Party*, p. 24. Jeremy Noakes, *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921 - 1933* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 110 - 11 argues that the feeling of neglect and isolation drove these people away from the conservative right toward the Nazi radical right. The economic suffering of shopkeepers and craftsmen has been put into proper perspective by Heinrich A. Winkler, *Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republic* (Cologne, 1972), pp. 30, 79, 104 - 106.

26) According to Kater, *Nazi Party*, pp. 39 - 41 farmers flocked to the NSDAP after 1928, and bore a major responsibility for Hitler's victory in 1930. See also, Werner T. Angress, "The Political Role of the Peasantry in the Weimar Republik," in: *Review of Politics* 21 (1959), pp. 538 - 540; Johann Dörner, *Bauernstand und Nationalsozialismus* 2nd ed. (Munich, 1930), pp. 12 - 13, 22, 40 - 41; Onno Poppinga, *Bauern und Politik* (Frankfurt/Main and Cologne, 1975), pp. 44 - 45; Hans-Jürgen Puhle, *Politische Agarbewegungen in kapitalistischen Industriegesellschaften: Deutschland, USA und Frankreich im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1975), p. 90; John E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika, The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany. 1928 - 45* (London and Beverly Hills, 1976), p. 26; Larry E. Jones, "Inflation, Revaluation, and the Crisis of Middle-Class Politics: A Study in the Dissolution of the German Party System, 1923 - 28, in: *Central European History* 12 (1979), pp. 146 - 147; Rudolf Heberle, *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus: Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918 - 1932* (Stuttgart, 1963).

represented in the SS leadership relative to their strength in the Reich 27). Compared to the Reich, where only about 3 percent of the population would have been classified as upper middle class according to our criteria, some seventeen to twenty percent of the fathers and roughly one third of the *Führer* matched this category. Among the fathers this overall overrepresentation is fairly consistent from one job category to the next, that is, on the average paternal occupations classified as upper middle class occupations were usually five times higher than the corresponding categories were for the general population. As to the *SS-Führer* themselves, the picture is a little more diverse.

Although in general SS members had twice the representation of upper middle class occupations that their fathers did, there was a good deal of variation in the proportions of individual occupational categories. Whereas those SS recruits who listed themselves as management level employees made up between .8 to 1.6 percent, and the higher civil servants 28) constituted a mere 1.0 to 2.0 percent, of all occupations, the so-called entrepreneurial category was void of even a single individual. These relatively low figures are of course balanced by the conspicuously high proportion of recruits who listed themselves as "professionals" and "students" 29). Depending on the SS branch to which an individual belonged, some twelve to twenty percent of all SS leaders claimed to have held or at least trained for professional occupations. Among the professionals, the majority included health care professionals such as physicians 30) and, to a lesser degree, dentists, and a few veterinarians, while the second largest contingent of professionals consisted principally of attorneys.

27) Our findings here are in total agreement with those by *Kater*, *Nazi Party*, p. 27 who established that the "elites were consistently overrepresented in the Party since its very beginnings". *Wegner*, *Politische Soldaten*, p. 223 indicates that 45 to 50 percent of *SS-Führer* with a rank of *Standartenführer* or higher came from the upper middle class. *Boehner*, *SS Officer Corps*, puts the percentage of upper middle class occupations for the SS leadership at 33 % (pp. 163 - 164, Table 6.1) and 39 % (p. 206, Table 206).

28) On the difficulties facing higher civil servants see *Childers*, *National Socialism and the New Middle Class*, p. 22; *Mommsen*, *Beamten*, p. 197.

29) For the attraction that fascist movements and ideas held for the intellectual see *Juan J. Linz*, "Some Notes Toward the Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," p. 40, in: *Walter Laqueur*, ed., *Fascism, A Readers Guide. Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Berkeley, 1976) and *Alastair Hamilton*, *The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism 1919 - 1945* (New York, 1971).

30) The manifold activities of the SS offered many employment opportunities for physicians and, for the most part, they carried out legitimate medical functions. *Neuss-Hunkel*, *Die SS* pp. 74. The duties of SS physicians are spelled out in a memorandum, dated 21.1.1939, by *Brigadeführer*, *Dr. Grawitz*, *Reichsarzt-SS*. In addition to the more obvious tasks that any physician might carry out, such as the treatment of injuries, these duties included the selection of recruits, the drawing up of hygiene guidelines for clothing and buildings, dietary counseling, sports medicine, criminal pathology. Records of the *Reich Leader SS* and *Chief of German Police*, Washington: National Archives, Microcopy T-175/17/620621-625.

It has been suggested that both doctors and lawyers had solid economic motives for joining the Nazis, the former for the reason that either their earnings were declining or they feared socialized medicine, and the latter because young attorneys in particular suffered from an overcrowding of their profession 31).

As to students, their high proportion among SS - F ü h r e r comes as no surprise for their attraction to fascist parties in general and their preponderance within the NSDAP in particular have been well established 32). Since potentially their advanced educational preparation predisposed them for privileged social and economic status, all those SS leaders who represented themselves as students were classified as belonging to the upper middle class. It appears that these young men must have been unwilling to commit themselves to traditional professional careers because virtually all students within our samples had either just finished secondary school, most of them with an A b i t u r, or had just dropped out of a university before accepting the non-traditional careers of SS leaders in Himmler's Black Order. Within the SS - T V and SS - V T respectively, students constituted 17.4 percent and 16.3 percent of all former occupations within the leadership of the SS. In fact, almost one half of all upper middle class occupations were accounted for by the student category. The only exception to this pattern was the membership of the A l l g e m e i n e - S S where, because the age structure of its membership was more advanced and most of the men had full-time occupations before joining the SS, the proportion of students was relatively insignificant.

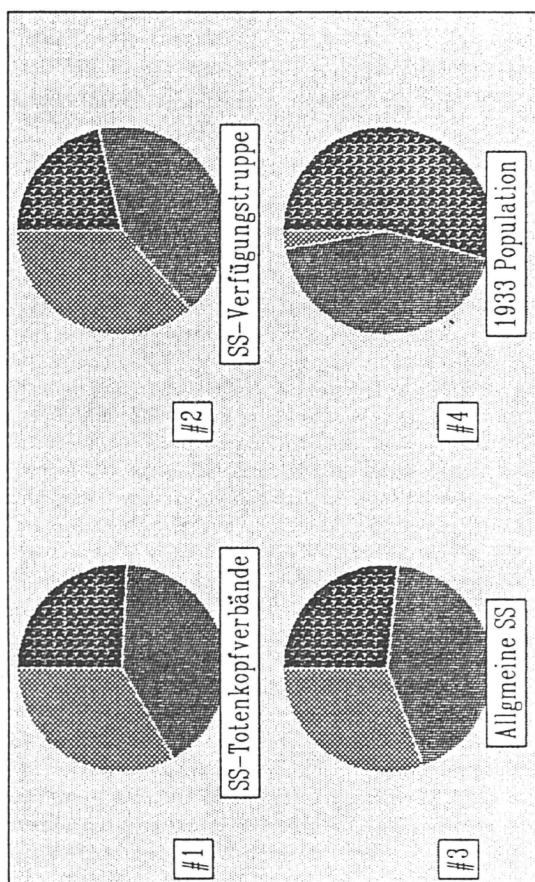
SS ideology did not emphasize or particularly value the importance of education 33), but there is no denying that a large share of the SS leadership was root-

31) K a t e r, Nazi party, pp. 67 - 68.

32) Noting the high proportion of high school students and university students within the NSDAP, K a t e r Nazi Party, pp. 27, 44 speculates that perhaps as much as half of the entire student body may have joined the Nazis by 1930. L i n z, Comparative Study, p. 67 maintains that students constituted an important segment of all fascist parties. Also germane to this matter are Hans Peter B l e u e l and Ernst K l i n n e r t, Deutsche Studenten auf dem Weg ins Dritte Reich: Ideologien - Programme - Aktionen 1918 - 1935 (Gütersloh, 1967); Anselm F a u s t, Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund: Studenten und Nationalsozialismus in der Weimarer Republik, I (Düsseldorf, 1973); Jürgen S c h w a r z, Studenten in der Weimarer Republik. Die deutsche Studentenschaft in der Zeit von 1918 bis 1923 und Ihre Stellung zur Politik (Berlin, 1971); Michael S. S t e i n b e r g, Sabers and Brownshirts: The German Students' Path to National Socialism 1918 - 1935 (Chicago and London, 1977); Wolfgang Z o r n, "Student Politics in the Weimar Republic," in: Journal of Contemporary History 5 (1970), pp. 128 - 143; Michael H. K a t e r, Studentenschaft und Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland 1918 - 1933. Eine sozialgeschichtliche Studie zur Bildungskrise in der Weimarer Republik (Hamburg, 1975). For the period preceding the Great War see Konrad Jarausch, "Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialization: The Case of Students in Imperial Germany," in: Journal of Modern History 50 (1978) pp. 609 - 630, and Jarausch, Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism (Princeton, 1982).

Social Class of SS-Führer 1938 (%)

#	1	2	3	4
	26	21	27	54
%	41	42	43	43
%	33	36	31	3
%				



ed in the educated bourgeoisie 34). As a whole the S S - F ü h r e r k o r p s tended to be much better educated than the German population 35), with roughly one third of its membership having either obtained an A b i t u r or even attended a university 36). It seems that a university degree, or even an above average education without a degree, still offered a preferential basis for advancing into the leadership of the SS. The fact that a purposely avowed "open elite" recruited a third of its membership from traditional elite groups of society was not, however, because the educational advantage of an A b i t u r i e n t, or academic, was so highly valued. Rather it was because numerous positions within the SS such as physicians, who, combined with lawyers, were the largest single academically trained contingent in all SS branches, made certain minimum academic training mandatory 37).

33) The relative non-importance of formal education was demonstrated by the entrance requirements to the SS cadet schools; acceptance in these Junkerschulen was not dependent on specific educational prerequisites. George H. S t e i n, *The Waffen-SS, Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1933 - 1945* (Ithaca and London, 1966), p. 13, for example, concluded: "The entrance requirements of the SS cadet schools were exacting with respect to racial, physical and political factors, but education and nonpolitical background were discounted." According to Himmler, some 40 % of the officer candidates accepted before 1939 had only an elementary school education. "Rede des Reichsführer-SS vor SS-Gruppenführern am 8.11. 1937," T-175/90/2612395. See also H a u s s e r, *Waffen SS im Einsatz* (Göttingen, 1953) p. 13, and Neusüss-Hunkel, *Die SS*, pp. 23 - 24. By 1939 both professors and students were viewed by National Socialists, including Hitler, with outright contempt. Geoffrey J. G i l e s, "German Students and Higher Education Policy in the Second World War," in: *Central European History* 17 (1984), pp. 330 - 354, here 330 - 31.

34) This is in agreement with the findings of both W e g n e r, *Politische Soldaten*, p. 228 and B o e h n e r t, *SS. Officer Corps*, pp. 117 - 118.

35) Taking the male enrollment of pupils in secondary schools in 1938 (432,977) and the number of male students matriculated at German universities in the Summer semester of 1938 (48,545), and comparing them to the male population age 11 - 19 and age 20 - 23 in 1938 respectively, one would expect that 9,4 % of German youth attended a secondary school and 4,3 % a university. These figures were taken from the *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1935* and the *Statistisches Handbuch von Deutschland 1928 - 1944*.

36) Even though a large number of SS leaders attended a university, a sizeable proportion never completed their studies. More precisely, 28.8, 37.8, and 17.8 percent of the S S - T V, S S - V T, and A l l g e m e i n e S S, respectively, never completed their university education.

37) The major field of study of those who attended a university reinforces the proportion of men that we could identify as physicians and lawyers. For the three SS branches the breakdown was as follows:

S S - T V 67,2 % Medicine, 10.6 % Jurisprudence

S S - V T 47.3 % Medicine, 14.9 % Jurisprudence

A l l g. S S 42.3 % Medicine, 23.5 % Jurisprudence.

These finding seem to contradict those of Gunnar C. B o e h n e r t, "The Jurists in the SS - Führerkorps, 1925 - 1939, in: G. H i r s c h f e l d and L. K e t t e n a c k e r eds., *Der 'Führerstaat': Mythos und Realität. Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 361 - 374 who identifies lawyers as the single largest academically trained contingent of his "sample".

Table 1: Distribution of Occupational Groupings for SS-Führer, their Fathers, SA-Führer in 1935, the 1933 and 1938 NSDAP, and the Population of 1933

Occupational Groups	SS-Führer in 1938			Fathers			SA-Führer in 1933	NSDAP in 1933	NSDAP in 1938	Population in 1933
	SS-TV	SS-VT	Allg. SS	SS-TV	SS-VT	Allg. SS				
Unskilled Workers	2.6	1.1	4.2	7.4	5.5	7.9	7.2	12.6	13.7	37.2
Skilled Workers	22.6	16.8	21.7	19.8	17.3	18.8	5.7	18.1	19.5	17.3
Military Enlisted ^b	0.5	3.6	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.0	7.24	-----	-----	-----
Lower Class	25.7	21.5	26.7	27.5	23.0	26.7	13.3	30.7	33.2	54.5
Independent Craftsmen	0.3	0.1	0.1	5.8	5.0	3.5	2.6	8.9	9.1	9.6
Farmers	5.0	4.3	7.6	6.3	6.8	8.7	6.8	8.9	8.1	7.7
Small Businessmen	0.3	1.4	0.5	6.0	6.6	7.6	10.5	12.8	5.1	6.0
Salaried Employees	31.1	30.2	30.8	17.6	20.1	19.9	40.5	10.6	21.8	12.4
Civil Servants	2.4	4.4	3.6	18.4	19.8	13.4	10.3	11.7	10.3	5.2
Military: NCO	2.1	1.7	0.1	1.1	0.5	0.3	1.3	-----	-----	-----
Nonacademic Professionals	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	4.2	3.4	1.8
Lower Middle Class	41.2	42.1	42.7	55.2	58.8	53.4	72.0	57.1	57.8	42.7
Managers	0.8	0.3	1.6	2.5	1.5	1.4	3.8	2.3	1.7	0.5
Higher Civil Servants	1.0	1.1	2.1	6.0	7.2	5.9	3.7	2.8	0.0	0.5
Professionals	12.6	12.5	19.9	3.0	4.6	8.5	1.8	3.0	2.6	1.0
Students	17.4	16.3	1.9	-----	-----	-----	-----	1.7	4.3	0.5
Entrepreneurs	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.0	3.2	2.5	2.4	0.4	0.3
Military: Officers	1.3	6.2	5.1	3.6	2.9	0.9	0.5	-----	-----	-----
Upper Middle Class	33.1	36.4	30.6	17.3	18.2	19.9	12.3	12.2	12.7	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	97.6 ^a	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of Cases	380	657	858	364	586	656	951	3,316	234	27,047,899

Sources:

(1) Percentages of occupations and classes in gainfully employed German population (except in the case of students) and percentages of NSDAP joiners in the Reich figures calculated on the basis of data in Michael H. K a t e r, The Nazi Party. A social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919 - 1945 (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 241, 152;

(2) Percentages of occupations and classes for SA-Führer are based on "standardized" occupations for men who joined the SA between 1925 - 1933 as calculated by Mathilde J a m i n, Zwischen den Klassen: Zur Sozialstruktur der SA-Führerschaft (Wuppertal, 1984), 194 - 953.

a) This column does not add up to 100 % because one of Jamin's categories, mithelfende Familienangehörige (2.3 %), was not included in this table.

b) in cases marked by a dash (- - - -), the figure for this particular category could not be ascertained.

Table 2. Highest Level of Educational Attainment

Educational Level	SS-Branch		
	SS.TV	SS.VT	Allg.SS
Primary School	34.7	25.0	37.0
Middle School	8.5	11.6	4.2
Secondary School	22.8	22.0	22.9
Secondary School w. Abitur	13.5	16.4	4.3
University	4.9	8.3	5.3
University w. Degree	12.2	13.7	24.4
Other	3.4	2.8	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of Cases	386	671	816

Furthermore, the bimodal distribution of the variable measuring educational attainment also established that an almost equally sizable number of SS *Führer* had attended only a *Volksschule*, while another proportion completed only some sort of secondary education without an *Abitur*. The latter, or any other qualifying school diploma, was not necessary to embark on a *Führer* career, and neither the SS-VT nor SS-TV had designated officer candidates in the same way the *Wehrmacht* did³⁸). In fact, if the *Abitur* had been a prerequisite for entry into the *Führerkorps*, only about one third of these men would have ended up as leaders of the SS. The result was that university graduates rubbed shoulders with men who had completed as little as eight years of formal education. Despite certain vicissitudes within the various branches of the SS, the pattern brought out by the data is clear and provides a simple and blunt message: in terms of education, the SS leadership was distinguished by diversity. Formal education as an indispensable necessity for social advancement was for all intents and purposes a moot consideration within the SS and, in this respect, National Socialism did bring about a considerable social change.

Social Structure: An Assessment

The basis of recruitment for the leadership of Heinrich Himmler's Order was sufficiently broad to invite the characterization of the SS leadership as an elite which secured recruits – though in varying proportions – from the entire juste

38) *Wegner*, *Politische Soldaten*, pp. 140.

milieu of German bourgeois society 39). From this heterogeneity in social origins certain conclusions follow. To begin with, the group of people whom we have analyzed hardly conforms to the usual picture we have of lower-middle class Germans flocking to the banners of National Socialism. The high proportion of workers on the one hand and the even higher proportion of upper middle

39) A number of scholars and contemporary observers have pointed to a broad base of support for fascism in general and National Socialism in particular. As early as 1923 Clara Ze t k i n, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus," cited in Ernst N o l t e, ed., *Theorien über den Faschismus* (Cologne and Berlin, 1967), p. 88 observed that "the carrier of fascism is not a small caste, but broad social groups, large masses which reach far into the proletariat." Others have echoed similar sentiments. For example, Wolfgang S a u e r, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism," in: *American Historical Review* LXII (1967), p. 410 has argued that "historical evidence shows that support of Fascism may not be confined to the classical elements of the middle class... but may extend to a wide variety of groups." In a similar vein Michael H u r s t, "What is Fascism?" in: *The Historical Journal* XI (1968), p. 179 has suggested that "component sectors of both fascism and national socialism could not be reduced to the lower middle class and the Lumpenproletariat; an assorted variety of social categories took an active part in the fascist movements." Heterogeneity of social structure is also stressed by Eric G. R e i c h e, *The Development of the SA in Nürnberg, 1922 - 1934* (New York, 1986), p. 229, who concludes that "Hitler's supporters in the Nürnberg SA came from all classes, except the upper class. Neither predominantly lower middle class nor largely working class in background, the Nürnberg SA appeared indeed to be an organization that appealed to virtually all sectors of the city's male population..." As to the membership of the NSDAP, Wolfgang Z a p f, *Wandlungen der deutschen Elite: Ein Zirkulationsmodell Deutscher Führungsgruppen. 1919 - 1966* (Munich, 1965), p. 52 asserts that people from all occupations could be found in the early NSDAP. Paul M a d d e n, "Some Social Characteristics of Early Nazi Party Members, 1919 - 1923," in: *Central European History* 15 (1982), p. 48 suggests that the social composition of the early NSDAP membership "was considerably more heterogeneous than has usually been suggested." Harold J. G o r d o n Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* (Princeton, 1972), p. 82 likewise concluded that the preputsch Nazi movement as a whole constituted "a heterogeneous mixture of people of all classes and all professions and trades". Heinrich A. W i n k l e r, "Extremismus der Mitte? Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung," in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 20 (1972), pp. 175 - 191 characterized the mass basis of the NSDAP as dominantly middle class. But because of the significant proportion of workers he concluded that the NSDAP was a *Volkspartei* and not a class party of the bourgeois middle. See also by the same author "Mittelstandsbewegung oder Volkspartei? Zur sozialen Basis der NSDAP," in W. S c h i e d e r, ed., *Faschismus als soziale Bewegung*, Hamburg, 1976, pp. 97 - 118. An even more outspoken position has been taken by M ü h l b e r g e r, "The Sociology of the NSDAP," p. 504 who, after reviewing the quantitative evidence of numerous studies, asserts that "the NSDAP was a genuine Volkspartei" securing "support from all social classes in German society." Richard F. H a m i l t o n, *Who Voted For Hitler?* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 420 - 21 on the basis of electoral analysis of 14 large cities does not think that the lower middle class provided the mass basis for National Socialism. Thomas C h i l d e r s, *National Socialism and the New Middle Class*, in Reinhard Mann, ed., *Die Nationalsozialisten, Analysen faschistischer Bewegungen* (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 19 described the NSDAP as "a catch-all party of middle class

class representatives on the other, make it difficult at best to extend and sustain for the leadership of the SS the thesis of lower-middle class preponderance which has been repeatedly associated with the NSDAP membership and the Nazi electorate. Beyond that, the same heterogeneity of the SS's social structure does little to aid and abet the sweeping claims of classical elite theorists that elites are drawn from within narrowly constricted social or economic classes, especially the upper class. Although nobody is methodologically so naive as to accept all NS egalitarian rhetoric as the equivalent of the social-political reality of the Third Reich, our empirical evidence permits the conclusion that with respect to the SS or, more specifically, the leadership of that organization, a case can be made that some of the egalitarian objectives were indeed realized.

protest" and "party of bourgeois integration", while Jürgen W. Falter, "Warum die deutschen Arbeiter während des Dritten Reiches zu Hitler standen. Einige Anmerkungen zu Günther Mais Beitrag über die Unterstützung des nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystems durch Arbeiter," in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (13 1987), pp. 217 - 231, here 230 argues that based on the social profile of its voters and members, and taking into account the geographical variations, the NSDAP was socially the most balanced of all parties. As far as its social structure was concerned, the NSDAP came closest to being the ideal of a Volks- oder Integrationspartei.